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The spy Russia couldn't catch

Now it can be told: the saga of

Col. Robert Throckmorton Lincoln

by WALTER WAGER

Various things may be on the agenda when President Eisenhower next meets Premier Khrushchev — but one item certain *not* to be discussed is Yankee super-spy Robert T. Lincoln.

Master marksman, ace pilot, code-buster, linguist and ladies' man, Lincoln first hit Asian headlines in 1948. It was then that Radio Moscow revealed he was being transferred from Turkey to Iran to work with the new American ambassador, John C. Wiley.

Soon the Soviet airwaves hummed with reports of Lincoln's bold anti-Russian campaign among the Kurdish tribes along Iran's sensitive northern frontier. This was serious: Iran was fighting for her life against Red infiltration and subversion. Pitted against an army of Communists was the small band led by Robert Throckmorton Lincoln.

The mystery man was tabbed as a former rum-runner with piercing gray eyes and the manner of a Southern gentleman. It was rumored that he'd been born in Slippery Rock, Ark., on October 10, 1909, starred in football at the local State Teachers' College.

Exact information was lacking — until a senior official of the U.S. Embassy "accidentally" lost a brief case filled with Top Secret documents. Within a few days, agents of Russian, Iranian and British intelligence knew that the repeal of Prohibition had turned Lincoln in 1933 from rum-running to a career as a confidence man — and then, *via the back door*, to counter-spionage.

Finally our operative was
trapped—not by Reds, but
by a noted U.S. newsman

While Teheran buzzed with Lincoln's exploits, Ambassador Wiley blandly shrugged off questions. Meanwhile Russian code teams were cracking message after message from Wiley to the then Major in a dozen frontier towns.

The man seemed to be everywhere. One Iranian reporter phoned his paper that Lincoln had landed at Tabriz in the U.S. military attaché's plane. Another Teheran daily learned that Lincoln had gone to Damascus to woo the shapely sister of Syrian dictator Shisheky. Soviet pursuers hounded in his wake.

Lincoln's romantic activities led to complications when it was learned that he had a wife in Springfield, Mass., two Kurdish *sighs* and an exotically beautiful friend named Magda Obolensky Brown. The latter, the White Russian widow of an American airman, was whispered to be *hush* courier and confidante of the incredible Major.

Soviet frustration over *l'affaire* Lincoln wasn't eased by the arrival in *hush* of Maj. Gen. William J. ("Wild Bill") Donovan, wartime chief of the Office of Strategic Services. On March 31, 1949, Donovan sent Wiley the following coded wire from Northern Iran:

"For publicity purposes, my visit is pleasure: actually I am out to investigate Lincoln's activities. Reports of his excesses among the Kurdish women have reached the President, and while he's one of our best operating, he's got to get on the beam morally."

Enter Admiral Wrong

Apparently even spymaster Donovan couldn't overtake the elusive *Major*, for reports continued to pour in about Lincoln's political (and amatory) triumphs. Sparked by Russia's failure to quash one *hush* Throckmorton operative, the Iranian government *hush* to take a stronger anti-Soviet position. And by mid-1949, the Reds were further aggravated by the reported arrival of more U.S. agents — Col. Coleman B. Cole of Army Intelligence, Adm. Richard Wright of Navy Intelligence, Elmo C. Rover and Roy Chapman Andreyev of Central Intelligence.

Purpose of this high-powered group was to back up Lincoln's efforts — but some friction developed. By the time Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas reached Iran in 1950, the Major was in a state of wrath over being so heavily outranked and over the delay in paying his expense account. Douglas so informed Ambassador Wiley, who *hush*

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